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THE
OUTLINES OF A PLAN
FOR ESTABLISHING IN NEW-YORK,
AN
ACADEMY AND INSTITUTION
OF THE
FINE ARTS,
ON SUCH A SCALE AS IS REQUIRED BY THE IMPORTANCE OF THE SUBJECT, AND
THE WANTS OF A GREAT AND GROWING CITY, THE CONSTANT
RESORT OF AN IMMENSE NUMBER OF STRANGERS
FROM ALL PARTS OF THE WORLD. THE
RESULT OF SOME THOUGHTS ON
A FAVOURITE SUBJECT.

BY ITHIEL TOWN.

NEW-YORK:
GEORGE F. HOPKINS & SON, PRINTERS,
No. 44 Nassau-street.

1835.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

WHEN it is considered how easy it would be for gentlemen of wealth and taste in this great and enterprising city, to raise a capital in transferable shares of four or five hundred thousand dollars, in the course of five years, and to invest it in the most judicious manner in Europe, during the same period of time, in purchasing such important works of art for establishing a National Gallery or Institution of Fine Arts, as would at any time be worth the cost, even in the country where purchased; and, that such works of *vertu*, would be of double the value in our country, of such cost, because of our great need of them, and the consequent benefit which would thereby be imparted to many branches of manufactures in consequence;—and when, also, it is considered how great a source of intellectual amusement of a high and noble kind, would be derived from such a collection, separate from such advantages to our arts and manufactures, not only to our own citizens of every class, but to the immense number of persons who constantly visit New York for business or pleasure; and that so far from operating as a tax or incumbrance upon the contributors to such an increasing collection on the arts, it would, under judicious management, be a self-increasing collection in its value and interest, as well as productive of usefulness and pleasure. Directly or indirectly, most persons in our widely extended country, many of whom visit the city annually, would not only be pleased, gratified, and benefitted themselves, but would impart the same pleasure and usefulness to those among whom they reside. In fine, when all the circumstances are taken into view, especially the great beneficial effects that would be rendered to all branches of our arts and manufactures, in relation to taste and beauty of execution, as well as the good effect in forming a suitable standard or judgement for the appreciating and enjoyment of correct taste and merit in the manufacture of all necessary articles for use or luxury, is it not strange, that so small a part of the wealth of this opulent and growing city should not have

been ere this time appropriated to this important and elegant subject, as readily as to so many others of far less importance, both as respects the present good effect and the future fame of the city in history? May the artists, the mechanics, the manufacturers, as well as all other classes of citizens, not look to each other to co-operate jointly under one or two charters on a liberal scale, for placing the cause of the Fine Arts on that standing, which other less important subjects have for a long time received, either by some such plan as the following pages exhibit the outline of, or as may result from some modification or improvement of this plan into a better one? In hope of such a result, I will submit the scheme to all lovers of the arts, with all its imperfections, hoping most sincerely, and but little doubting, that something will soon be done worthy of the largest, most liberal, and most wealthy city in America.

ITHIEL TOWN.

NEW YORK, *May 20th*, 1835.

A Plan for the establishment of an Academy and Institution of the Fine Arts, under the title of "THE UNITED STATES ACADEMY AND INSTITUTION OF THE FINE ARTS."

THE general plan should consist of two branches, distinct in all respects as to the entire control, government, and ownership of property — each to be mutually accommodated by the other in such manner that the benefits of all the talents and property of both institutions may, for all important purposes, be as fully and as advantageously enjoyed by artists, connoisseurs, amateurs, and the public, as could possibly be done, were it practicable, (which I believe may well be doubted,) to unite in one well-governed institution, every department of such a national school and repository for the fine arts, in the most perfect and satisfactory manner, without the possibility of any obstruction or difficulty in the management and control of it. All past experience seems to show most conclusively, (Philadelphia and New-York in their history of the fine arts, might be referred to as a proof of the position,) that a body of artists, pursuing their profession with the requisite ambition and pride of the art, and the other part of a community, still much more numerous, comprising connoisseurs, amateurs, merchants, and all other professions and trades, — who would, from their numbers and wealth, be able to raise a large amount of stock for the purchase of all the requisite works of art, for an institution, etc. *cannot* agree harmoniously, for any great length of time together, either in the choice of officers, mode of government, or the manner of estimating their talents as artists, against the property or stock of the shareholders. It may be safely *repeated*, that this kind of harmony cannot subsist long enough, and free enough from difficulties, to ensure any valuable purpose whatever, for much length of time. This position being

admitted, as I think it *must be*, what next presents itself? It is the most obvious and imperative *fact*, that, in a new country like ours, neither can the arts flourish, or artists be educated, without going abroad for instruction, to be much above mediocrity; (and what is still worse, perhaps,) nor can that knowledge and taste be diffused into the minds of a community, which is necessary either to encourage the arts, or give employment to artists, by a demand for their works, without an extensive library relating to the fine arts with their various kindred branches, extensive collections of engravings of the best masters, a collection of ancient and modern sculpture and bass-reliefs, of paintings, ancient and modern, also, of coins, medals, and various specimens and relics of antiquity, armour, etc. etc. But it may well be said that any near approach to a respectable and adequate collection of such valuable works of art, as here enumerated, would cost, at least, from \$300,000 to \$500,000; *if so*, can any body of artists themselves make such a collection, and establish an institution, *which*, together with their own well-regulated schools, lectures, etc., shall present to our new country the means of educating *artists*, as well as the diffusing of taste and knowledge of this kind, into the minds of the community at large, to enable them to appreciate the arts? *Most certainly not!* no one will pretend it. How then is such an object to be accomplished in our country, at some proper point, the most accessible to the artists of the whole country, so as thereby to spread its influence and important use to all our manufacturing and mechanic arts? It requires a large *capital*: the artists have it not *themselves*, nor can they agree to join in the same institution with those who have it—they will not brook for a moment, the idea of money and its consequent influence and power in the government of such an institution.

One way certainly remains which is practicable and easily accomplished, if it were commenced and pursued in the right manner, either in Philadelphia, New-York, Boston, or Balti-

more, — viz : — to obtain a charter for such an institution as described, with a capital in *transferable* stock, of \$300,000 to \$500,000, in shares of \$25 each, to be *paid in*, in five annual instalments, with certain privileges in the use of the institution in proportion to the amount paid, instead of a dividend, which should in no case ever be made, nor the stock be divided. Persons *more able* would take *more* shares, to obtain the necessary or enlarged privilege for their families, or their less able friends and relations — a large sum might be raised in this manner, much of which in small sums, that might be paid by almost any artist or citizen, to *whom*, in return, the use of the institution would be of great importance, and, in many instances, much greater to the public, by this means, than the effect of such influence upon more wealthy men might be.

Such an institution being established, with suitable buildings, not only for containing the works of art of all kinds, but having suitable halls, exhibition-rooms, school-rooms, etc., suited to the wants of the artists, both in their public capacity, and in their private wants for their regular business, for which *public rooms* they may either pay reasonable rents, or give in exchange such rights and privileges in their exhibitions, etc. as would be an equivalent. By such mutual arrangements of accommodation as might be made between the two bodies, *each* institution would have all the advantages of the other, and yet no connexion whatever in their government or ownership of property. The artists might regulate all their own schools, exhibitions, and election of members, and would have such an amount of property, or works of art, as they might find convenient, or immediately useful, which would be under their own entire control — the other institution would in like manner have their *real estate*, extensive library, and other works of art to any extent, under their own charter, organization and control — many other minor appendages and facilities to these two main institutions may be added, to promote the general object ; but I will now state my ideas more at length of each one, and of their connexion with each other.

Having before adopted the title of "The United States Academy and Institution of the Fine Arts," for the two institutions when harmoniously joined together, lending their aid, talents and influence to each other, by mutual agreement for their joint accommodation, without the possibility of rivalry, *envy*, or any other interference on the part of passion or interest.

I would particularly state, that the *Academy* should be, as its name imports, a *school*, composed of academicians, honorary members, and students in the arts of design and imitation — the academicians to have the entire control and management of all its affairs in relation to government and property — to elect their *own* and the honorary members ; appoint a president to preside over them, a foreign corresponding secretary, a home corresponding secretary, and a secretary to the meetings, etc., of the academy ; a vice president, a treasurer ; also professors and lecturers for all necessary branches, and to regulate the admission of students to the schools, and the public to the lectures ; also to establish and regulate one or two annual exhibitions of living artists, and any and every other particular relating to the members, the academy, its schools and its exhibitions.

The other great *branch*, here stated, "*The Institution*," should be chartered with a transferable stock as stated, of \$300,000 to \$500,000, in shares of \$25 each, payable in five annual instalments, each share to be entitled to a vote, when paid in, and, in all cases, every twenty-five dollars paid in on shares of stock to be entitled to a vote. All shareholders, who may reside any where in the United States, should have privileges in attending exhibitions, etc., in proportion to the amount actually paid in, to be determined equitably by the president and board of control, but in no case should any dividend of income or stock be made, but be expended in the enlargement and promotion of the institution and its objects. The charter should allow of holding a lot or lots in the city, equal *in all* to four hundred feet square, with all necessary halls, exhibition-rooms, lecture and school-rooms, artists' club-

rooms, rooms for sculptures, bass-reliefs, paintings, engravings, draftsmen, etc. etc., either to rent to the artists for private rooms for business, or used by them, as stated, for all their public purposes; any rooms in such buildings not needed, as above stated, might be rented for any other purpose for which they might be best suited.

The shareholders should elect sixty trustees by ticket, viz : twenty to serve three years, twenty to serve two years, and twenty to serve one year, after *which*, they should annually elect twenty to serve three years, and fill all vacancies by death or otherwise. The sixty trustees, so elected, should meet once a year, and oftener if necessary; they should elect a chairman and secretary at each meeting, to preside and keep all necessary records; also a treasurer, to be elected once in two years, and oftener if necessary; they should also elect annually, five managers of the real estate, income, and all other matters relating to the buildings, repairing, renting and receiving rents, and all other kinds of dues, interest, payment of stock, and every kind of income belonging to the institution, and to see that it is paid immediately into the treasury; they are to have power to draw orders upon the treasury for such sums as they may deem necessary for building and repairing, but, for nothing else, and all such expenditures over five thousand dollars, or for all new buildings, the planning, arranging and amount of cost to be regulated by these managers, jointly with the *board* of control and arrangement, which shall consist of twelve persons, to be also elected by the *trustees* for two years, half of whom to retire from office annually; they should be elected from any of the shareholders, whether *trustees* or *not*, but they are in all cases to be elected for their knowledge, taste and experience in relation to selecting, purchasing, or any way procuring and arranging in rooms, etc. etc., all kinds of property, which the halls, library and all other parts of the building, are intended to contain, as the property of the institution. This board, besides a joint voice in relation to buildings, as above provided, and large expenditures, shall also

elect a president, two vice presidents, a foreign and a home corresponding secretary, and a secretary to their own board ; also a librarian and his assistants, with such keepers, etc., as shall be by them deemed necessary and proper, all of whom to be appointed from any of the shareholders, whether in other offices or not ; and *further*, all the necessary professors, lecturers or teachers for such schools or lectures as they shall from time to time see fit to establish, institute and continue for a limited or regular term of time, and to do and cause to be done under their organized form of president and board of control, (the twelve only voting who were chosen by the trustees, and the president when *not* of that number, in case of a tie,) all other necessary business relating to the institution, not otherwise herein provided for, and to draw orders on the treasurer to pay all such necessary expenses, purchases, etc. etc., which they may see fit to incur, in accordance with their duties herein specified or authorized, to the extent of the means.

The president and board of control should also have all the necessary halls, exhibition-rooms, school-rooms, and other apartments, suitably erected, fitted up, and every way prepared for the accommodation of the academy, which should be provided for on such terms and upon such principles of mutual accommodation, as would best promote the prosperity and dignity of the arts, and do justice to each institution, by the accommodation of the members of each in every respect, — which halls and the lecture-rooms are to be occupied by the lecturers of each institution, in such manner as to accommodate the members of *each*, and the public, in a suitable and convenient manner ; to be regulated by the mutual consultation of the president and board of the institution, and the president and academicians of the academy. The exhibition and public rooms of each institution should also in like manner be open for use, under suitable regulations, of the members of both institutions, in the best and most convenient manner, and upon the most equitable and liberal principles.

The property or collection of the institution to consist of sculptures, bass-reliefs, and paintings, ancient and modern; an extensive library of books relating to the fine arts, books of engravings, and engravings of history and mythology, portraits, etc.; coins and medals, ancient and modern; models of architecture, ancient and modern; drawings of all kinds; specimens and relics of antiquity of all kinds, such as vases, candelabra, ancient armour, etc.; specimens and objects of natural history; also, curious specimens of the mechanic's and manufacturer's arts; models of curious and useful inventions and improvements, especially such articles of improvements as relate to the fine arts, either directly or more remotely; — all of which to be obtained from time to time by the president and board of control, and arranged by them in the several buildings constructed and fitted up for the purpose: they should also regulate the times and terms of admission, and every other necessary preparation and duty relating to all parts of this kind of property: premiums should also be awarded annually, by both institutions, for designs, sculpture, models, paintings, engravings, etc.

A branch of the academy should also consist of instructions *for*, and encouragement *in*, *water-colour drawings*, and an exhibition room should be appropriated to this branch exclusively. The annual exhibition in London of water-colours is truly a splendid one, and is beginning to attract that notice and attention, by purchasers and otherwise, which this important subject is entitled to; and it is a branch of the fine arts in which females can easily and most successfully enter into competition with the males, and the advantages to the *arts and trades* of our country, as well as in the diffusion of a general taste for the arts of design and imitation, would be *immense*, as the cheapness of this mode will enable many more persons to possess good paintings executed in this beautiful manner. Another great advantage in one or two such extensive institutions in our country at proper points would be, that the members or artists might live any where in the country, and yet have great advantages from them, by going there *once*, or

occasionally, to study and attend the lectures, as medical and other students now do in the other professions; thus the advantages would reach the extremes of the United States.

Branch institutions might be connected and established in other cities and villages, the president of which, at least, might attend the principal institution, and carry home much knowledge and experience in regard to the good management, etc., of the arts in his own section of country.

Regular annual *conventions* should most certainly be held, and persons of knowledge, taste, and experience, in matters relating to the fine arts, should be sent to the large institution, either by other similar institutions, or such clubs or little associations of connoisseurs, amateurs, and artists, as might exist, or hereafter be formed in consequence of the inducements and advantages held out by such a system.

The advantages of such conventions, annually, would be very great, and the effect to raise the standard of our knowledge and standing in these arts, truly important. The principal mode to be used in accomplishing all the above objects, is simple and easy: it is merely this:—The subject must be talked of by persons of influence, pamphlets and newspaper essays must be written, public meetings, clubs and conversations must be held, and, after the subject is fully known and understood, and a sufficient number of persons and artists of influence have embarked in the cause, and a plan similar in substance to the above is well matured, on the broad basis of liberality and general accommodation; when this course shall have been pursued, I have no doubt, indeed I *know*, that in Philadelphia or New-York, an institution might be formed in the course of five to ten years, that would be worth millions to our country in its influence; that would astonish the world; it might be one that would do honour to London or Paris! There is no scarcity of materials for such collections, and many parts of Europe can supply thousands of such articles of *vertu*, many of which are among the best of the kind in the world.

One more appendage I will add to complete the whole

scheme, and it is one which peculiarly suits the genius of our country, and stimulates all its citizens to action, as well as to give their attention promptly to a subject. I would ask of the State the charter for a bank, to be denominated the *Artists' and Mechanics' Bank*; all the stockholders of which to be members of the academy or institution; no person to subscribe to the stock more than two thousand dollars, until the books had been kept open to artists, mechanics, etc., for sixty days; no person ever to be entitled to hold any stock without being an academician or a shareholder in the institution; the bank to have a capital of \$1,000,000, with liberty to increase it to \$3,000,000; its stock to pay no tax to the State, but to be required annually to pay one per ct. on its capital into the treasury of the institution for the increase of their works of art, and to enable them to offer premiums for the best performances annually of living artists of all kinds; otherwise the bank to be every way a distinct corporation from both the others, only having its stock owned, and at all times *held*, exclusively by *members* and *shareholders* in the *institutions* before stated. Thus these institutions might be raised from the extreme depths of poverty and beggary, and thus they would become objects respectable in themselves, and claiming, and even demanding, that respect, that attention, and that admiration, which one of the most important, useful and splendid applications of the human mind and its faculties is capable of achieving.





